

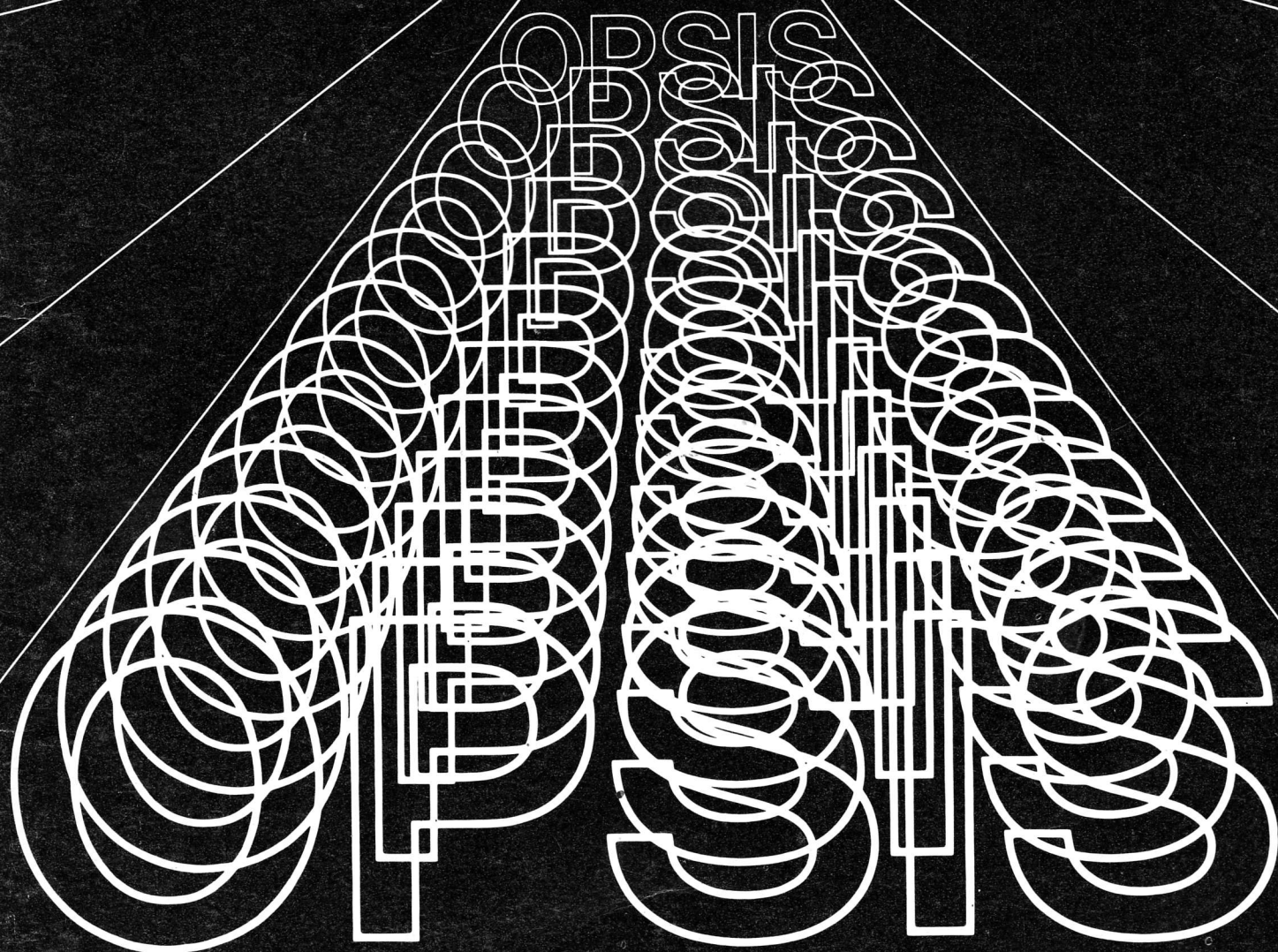
OPSIS

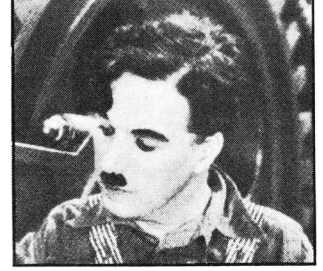
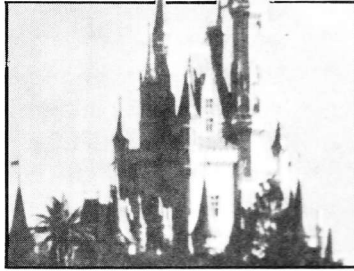
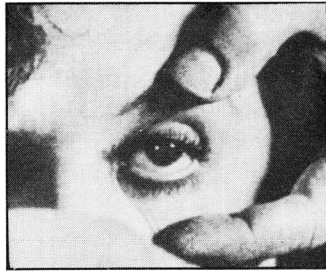
THE CANADIAN JOURNAL OF AVANT-GARDE AND POLITICAL CINEMA

VOLUME ONE NUMBER ONE

\$3.50

OPSIS





AS WE SEE IT

Five Definitions Around the Practice of Film Criticism

by Michael E. Eliot-Hurst 4
A Word About the View From Here by Tony Reif 5

CONSIDERATIONS

On Defining Avant-Garde Film by William C. Wees 7
Regina vs. Ian McLachlan, Susan Ditta, Al Razutis, David Bierk, by Al Razutis 13
Digicon 83: State-of-the-Art Art, by Jerry Barenholtz 27

NEW NARRATIVE

Wollen on Sex, Narrative and the Thrill (interview) 35
The Bad Sister (review), by Kass Banning 41
 'What wishes what it wishes it to be': **Armatage on Storytelling** (interview) 45
Three Stories from Storytelling 48
Storytelling (review), by Patricia Gruben 50
Ménage à Trois: Contemporary Film Theory, New Narrative and the Avant-Garde, by Al Razutis 52

REVIEWS

Five Films by Adam Swica, by Peter Chapman 66
Le Jardin (du Paradis) The Garden, by Peter Chapman 68
Le 12ième Festival International du Film de Montréal, by Stephen Sarrazin 68
Backspace/Update 71

Editors: Michael Eliot-Hurst, Al Razutis, Tony Reif. Managing editor: Carolyn McLuskie. Contributing editor: Peter Chapman. Art director: Bob Burns. Production assistance: Craig Condy Berggold, Roxanne Kellough.

Opsis is published three times a year by the Canadian Society for the Advancement of Critical Cinema, with the assistance of the Canada Council, and additional moral and material support from Simon Fraser University's Centre for the Arts, the Western Regional Production Office of the NFB, and Pacific Cinematheque. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Society.

Subscription rates: \$10 for three issues (\$12.50 overseas), from *Opsis*, 1616 W. 3rd Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1K2. Telephone: (604) 732-9012 or (604) 734-1628. Advertising rates on request; classifieds, 10 cents a word prepaid.

On Defining Avant-Garde Film

By WILLIAM WEES

To define avant-garde film is, in a sense, to defend it - not only against those who would deny its very existence, but also, and more importantly, against those who would revise its definition in order to make "avant-garde" accord with their own aesthetic or political preferences¹ (I assume that readers of this journal do not expect or need to have avant-garde film defended against the denigration of critics and practitioners committed entirely to the values of dominant, popular cinema.)

I propose, then, to review the history of the term "avant-garde" - in the arts in general and film in particular - and to argue that the historically accumulated meanings of the term (though problematic in many ways) are still valid, and should not be jettisoned for more limited or immediately expedient definitions. I will offer, in other words, a conservative defence of the radical implications of "avant-garde".

Originally, "avant-garde" was a military term: "The foremost part of an army; the vanguard or van", as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it². As a metaphor, it was first applied to advanced forms of literature, then to radical political programs, then to a combination of advanced art and politics, as illustrated in these ringing phrases written in 1825 by Olinde Rodrigues, a disciple of the French utopian socialist, Henri de Saint-Simon:

*It is we artists who will serve you as avant-garde... the power of the arts is in fact most immediate and most rapid: when we wish to spread new ideas among men, we inscribe them on marble or on canvas... What a magnificent destiny for the arts is that of exercising a positive power over society, a true priestly function, and of marching forcefully in the van of all the intellectual faculties...!*³

By the end of the 19th century, however, the radical implications of "avant-garde" had split in two. Although the term was still used in its political sense - as in Lenin's designa-

tion of the Communist Party as "the avant-garde of the proletariat" - it was more frequently applied to artists whose radicalism remained within the confines of art itself. This, of course, is the sense of the term most familiar today:

1) Those who create, produce, or apply new, original, or experimental ideas, designs, and techniques in any field, esp. in the arts...; 2) a group (as of writers or artists) that is unorthodox and untraditional in its approach; sometimes: such a group that is extremist, bizarre as arty and affected; 3) advocates and admirers of the avant-garde.

That definition from *Webster's Third* is characteristic of the term's current meanings, but Matei Calinescu has more precisely summed up the etymological implications of "avant-garde":

*Etymologically, two conditions are basic for the existence and meaningful activity of any properly named avant-garde (social, political or cultural): 1) the possibility that its representatives be conceived of, or conceive themselves as being in advance of their time..., and 2) the idea that there is a bitter struggle to be fought against an enemy symbolizing the forces of stagnation, the tyranny of the past, the old forms and ways of thinking that tradition imposes on us like fetters to keep us from moving forward.*⁴

All the essential elements for a definition of avant-garde arise from these two conditions: A sense of "being in advance of (the) time", and being in opposition to "the old forms and ways of thinking".

Renato Poggioli offers the most thorough analysis of these conditions in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. He treats them under four headings: Activism, "a taste for action, a sportive enthusiasm, and the emotional fascination for adventure", antagonism, "a spirit of hostility and opposition" toward both "the public" and "tradition"; nihilism, a joy in "destroying whatever stands in the way", and in engaging in "destructive, not constructive, labor"; and agonism, an expression of the "tension" and "alienation" that result

from "belonging to an intermediate state" in which one "no longer heeds the ruins and losses of others" or of oneself, and "welcomes and accepts this self-ruin".⁵

While the more demonstrative avant-garde movements, such as futurism, dadaism and surrealism, are Poggioli's chief reference points, the elements he examines pervade the whole of what I would call the modernist "tradition" of the avant-garde. The three elements of that tradition which are most relevant to defining the avant-garde are: 1) an oppositional stance vis-a-vis the social and artistic "establishment"; 2) a seemingly compulsive urge to explore new modes of artistic expression - in a word, experimentalism; and 3) a claim to being able to anticipate the future, to being always "in advance". I will consider each of these in turn, in order to show that while they are essential to a definition of the avant-garde, they are also more problematic than they may at first seem to be.

1. **The oppositional stance.** "Protest," says Poggioli, "is common to all avant-garde art."⁶ For Roger Shattuck, the avant-garde represents "a 'tradition' of heterodoxy and opposition."⁷ Eugene Ionesco "prefer(s) to define the avant-garde in terms of opposition and rupture,"⁸ and Peter Gidal insists that "The avant-garde is a didactic avant-garde. This is the historical function of all avant-garde movements, whether those involved know it or not."⁹ But these opinions have been challenged. Richard Gilman, for instance, argues that the avant-garde's "belligerence and contempt are historical accidents, not inevitabilities."¹⁰ Hilton Kramer insists that "The avant-garde has been, from the start, a vital coefficient of bourgeois culture."¹¹

Others have argued the same point: That the socio-economic conditions which produced "bourgeois liberalism", technology, urbanism, mass education, social mobility, democracy, etc., also produced the conditions that

have permitted the avant-garde to thrive. Hence Kramer's grim reminder that, "only where bourgeois liberalism itself was destroyed - not infrequently with a little help from the avant-garde - did the avant-garde suffer a brutal and enforced demise."¹² A reasonable conclusion would seem to be that the avant-garde's opposition to society goes hand-in-hand with a dependence on it.

2. Experimentalism. Poggioli voices the critical consensus: Technical and formal "experimentalism (is) one of the primary characteristics of avant-garde art." As a characteristic example, Poggioli quotes James Laughlin's statement that his *New Directions* books would offer "the best experimental writing" in order to provide a "testing ground...., a laboratory for the reader as well as the writer."¹³ This position has been challenged by Hans Enzensberger, who argues that art cannot be experimental; for experimentation is "a scientific procedure for the verification of theories or hypotheses," and requires methodical observation, control of variables and verifiable results capable of being duplicated by other experimenters - hardly the conditions under which most avant-garde art is produced.

Enzensberger concludes that avant-garde experimentalism is a "bluff" and an evasion that "unloads all responsibility on the receiver".¹⁴ While that may overstate the case, it is a reminder that "experimentalism" - like the term "avant-garde" itself - is more metaphorical than scientifically descriptive of what avant-garde artists do.

What "experimentalism" really refers to is the artists's ceaseless testing of the medium, that fanatical search for the "essential" in art which is perhaps the major characteristic of modernism. It is what Poggioli refers to as "the modern mystique of purity (which) aspires to... reduce every work to the intimate laws of its own expressive essence."

The result, says Poggioli, is "to abolish the discursive and syntactic elements, to liberate art from any connection with psychological and empirical reality."¹⁵ This is essentially the same phenomenon described by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis in their up-to-date critical vocabulary:

*In the avant-garde text, the semiotic produces the dissolution of fixed, uniform subjectivity. Characteristic are those twentieth century texts which minutely examine their own matter: language, systems of significations, and the subject implicated in the signification.*¹⁶

Works which "minutely examine their own matter" are, precisely, "experimental" in the best modernist and avant-garde sense of the term.

3. Being "in advance". Robert Hughes phrases it this way:

*The idea of an avant-garde art was predicated on the belief that artists, as social outsiders, could see further than insiders; that radical change in language (either oral or visual) could accompany, and even help cause, similar changes in life.*¹⁷

This is what John Weightman describes as the attempt of avant-garde artists "to espouse what they think is the movement of history by anticipating the crest of the next wave..."¹⁸ But such claims must face Robert Desnos' sarcastic challenge: "The question is, avant-garde of what?"¹⁹ and Hans Enzensberger's more carefully reasoned argument that "nobody knows what is up front, least of all he who has reached unknown territory." What the future holds, Enzensberger argues, can only be known *a posteriori*.²⁰ James Ackerman suggests that it is more a matter of "fleeing the status quo" than "penetrating into the future".²¹

Again, we seem to be dealing with an expression that is more metaphorical than literal. However, the avant-garde does define itself in relation to time, but in a broader sense than that of simply being "ahead". Ackerman has argued that "for the artists, historical awareness might be said to have initially (during the Renaissance) been a constraint, then (in the Romantic period) a liberation, and finally (in the twentieth century) an irresistible force impelling him into constant change."²² John Weightman insists that the avant-garde is part and parcel of "the scientific revolution" which replaced "the medieval belief in a finished universe by the modern scientific view of a universe evolving in time."²³ Arguing along similar lines, Michael Kirby concludes, " 'Avant-garde' refers specifically to a concern with the historical *directionality* of art."²⁴

However, it is possible to argue that a sense of "historical directionality", of "a universe evolving in time", underlies the concept of "progress" in science, commerce, politics, education and modern society in general. Thus, "avant-garde" may be simply a label for the most intense artistic expression of the main current of modern life and thought. Certainly it is difficult for the avant-garde to maintain its stance of "opposition and rupture" if its allegiance is to the same ideology of change and "progress" that animates society as a whole. As Ackerman puts it: "A society changing so rapidly that innovation has become the rule rather than the exception has abolished the role of the avant-garde."²⁵ Under such conditions the avant-garde is simply another source of fads and fashions, and finds itself in what Hilton Kramer calls "a profitable alliance with the traditional antagonists of the avant-garde - the mass media, the universities and the marketplace."²⁶ If so, then the main body of the army has caught up with and surrounded the avant-garde. Les Levine has chosen what are probably the most appropriate terms for describing and explaining these conditions - communications and mass media:

*The term avant-garde made sense only before McLuhan forced us to understand media... The alchemy of the avant-garde was "lead time", the assumption that a favored individual or group would have access to information or sensibilities not readily available to anyone else. Higher technology and mass production have made it possible for everyone to know and sense as much as anyone else now.*²⁷

If Levine is right, then thanks to the mass media, we are all avant-garde.

With the mention of media, let us shift attention to one medium - film. Does avant-garde film share in the same definitions and problematics that are characteristic of avant-garde art in general? I think it does, but in special ways that call for separate, specific examination.

First, there is the problem of names: "pure", "abstract", "poetic", "personal", "independent", "experimental" and "underground" may or may not refer to the same body of work included under the name "avant-garde". "Experimental cinema" is

more inclusive for Jean Mitry than it is for David Curtis or Dominique Noguez.²⁸ P. Adams Sitney's "avant-garde film" is essentially the same as Sheldon Renan's and Parker Tyler's "underground film", and all three deal almost exclusively with American films, while Stephen Dwoskin's "free cinema" includes the same Americans, but adds a number of Europeans as well.²⁹ Many of these same films appear as examples of what Malcolm Le Grice labelled "formal film" in 1972, but called "abstract film" in 1977³⁰ (appropriating a term generally reserved for non-figurative films like those made by Eggeling, Richter, Fischinger and the Whitney brothers).

Despite the diversity of names, there tends to be a consensus as to the body of films referred to, especially in the earlier, historical stages of avant-garde-experimental-abstract-underground film. Yet, taken as a whole, these films have no single element of form or content in common. Their differences are more notable than their similarities, and one may wonder how they can all fit the same definition.

In one sense they don't, because many discussions of avant-garde film simply do not offer a definition of the term. Sitney never defines "avant-garde film" in his *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978*. His examples constitute his definition. This is the usual practice (Noguez's lengthy explanation of why he chose the name "experimental" is a notable exception)³¹ and "avant-garde" or one of its synonyms is simply whatever the writer chooses to discuss under that name. This represents a purely pragmatic way of defining avant-garde film. Rather than the films illustrating a definition of avant-garde, they are the definition.

Defining by example - "in terms of recognized works, not theoretical principles," as Janet Bergstrom puts it³² - is a way of avoiding the controversy that can be aroused by definitions based on "value judgments" and "on opinions about what counts as avant-garde cinema."³³ Furthermore, as Malcolm Le Grice has said, "The very definition of seeming fundamentals is always open to historical redefinition."³⁴

While this may be true in principle,

in fact there has been very little "redefinition" of avant-garde film - except in the sense that terms from current critical vocabularies may replace older terms. Germain Dulac's definition of avant-garde film is as valid today as it was when she published it in 1932:

*We can use the term "avant-garde" for any film whose technique, employed with a view to a renewed expressiveness of image and sound, breaks with established traditions to search out, in the strictly visual and auditory realm, new emotional chords... The avant-garde film has this fundamental quality of containing, behind a sometimes inaccessible surface, the seeds of the discoveries which are capable of advancing film toward the cinematic form of the future. The avant-garde is born of both the criticism of the present and the foreknowledge of the future.*³⁵

To this should be added a further comment from the same essay: "In general, the (film) industry does not attach itself zealously to the contribution of art; the avant-garde, with its opposite impulse, considers nothing else. Whence the antagonism."³⁶

Dulac's definition includes all the familiar avant-garde attitudes: The rejection of the past, the opposition to conventional commercial uses of cinema, the search for the essential nature of the film medium, the orientation toward the future. More recent definitions have little to add, as the following examples show:

*What we seem to be talking about when we say avant-garde are movies that ignore, mess up, or reinvent conventional film language. (J. Hoberman)*³⁷

*I use "avant-garde" to refer to that body of work which engages with questions of film language and the relationship of filmmaker and spectator to film, but which is also produced in opposition to the dominant system of production, distribution and exhibition and is therefore part of independent cinema. (Pam Cook)*³⁸

*Our definition of avant-garde film will clearly hinge upon the qualities we associate with the broader context of "mainstream" or what we might call "dominant" cinema. In this case, the avant-garde will then be typified by its "opposition" to norms and values within its opposite. (Philip Drummond)*³⁹

Avant-garde film as outlined here, in its concern for the viewer and viewing, has as its project the breaking of the unity between fantasy and the scopic drive uti-

*lized by narrative cinema and towards which its codes tend... Avant-garde film arguably works on codification and the codified, which extends the notion of working on essence and material, making it less restrictive and aimed specifically at the spectator. (Al Rees)*⁴⁰



Marinetti, *SCRABRRrraaNNG* (1919) 'That evening in bed, she read again the letter from her gunner at the front'

The terminology differs from Dulac's, but otherwise the only difference is a somewhat greater emphasis on the oppositional and analytic functions of the avant-garde. That shift in emphasis is, in part, a legacy of the debates over "the two avant-gardes" that went on during the 1970s.⁴¹

The polarization of terms produced by that debate - "form" vs. "content", "aesthetics" vs. "politics" - reflected the ideological conflicts of the late '60s and early '70s and led some critics to insist that only politically revolutionary films could be called "avant-garde". It led others to recognize two avant-gardes; one based on formal-aesthetic concerns, the other on leftist-political concerns. Today, most critics would probably agree with Pam Cook's judgment: "The opposition between formalism and politics now seems too simple, especially in the context of an emerging body of work which questions such a division, a significant part of it produced by women. There is a danger in an argument which produces both terms of an opposition as discrete categories, as though 'politics' were an already given area, and as though 'formalism' automatically excluded that area..."⁴²

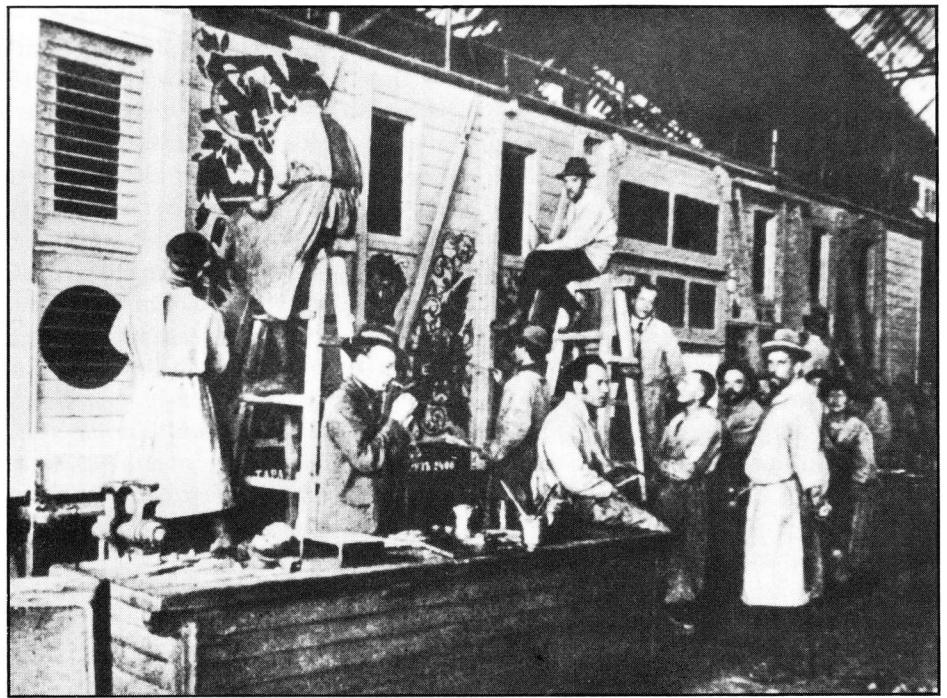
This is true, I believe, but what Cook and most other critics have not sufficiently appreciated is the degree to which earlier avant-garde work also merged "politics" and "formalism". This is precisely what it meant to "*épater la bourgeoisie*". Although there is not space to do so here, it would not be hard to show that "political" (not to be confused with "propagandist") intentions have significantly shaped the "formalist" tradition of avant-garde film from the 1920s to the present.

Nevertheless, it is true that "the two avant-gardes" debate highlighted the degree to which non-ideological definitions - if not practices - of the avant-garde had become virtual dogma by the 1960s, especially in American (and "Americanized") definitions of avant-garde film. Their effects are still with us, as can be seen in the ways avant-garde film is often contrasted with the purely technical and stylistic features of the commercial film industry.

In fact, avant-garde film is often defined entirely through sets of oppositions to commercial cinema: 8mm and 16mm vs. 35mm; "amateur" vs. "professional" equipment; individual control vs. division of labor; inexpensive vs. expensive productions; non-actors vs. actors; wild sound vs. sync sound, etc., - in short, "art" vs. "entertainment". However, since the "other", politicized avant-garde shared many of the supposedly "commercial" concerns, those sets of oppositions have turned out to be less absolute than they once seemed to be. In fact, some films in the traditional "formalist" avant-garde also shared some of these "commercial" elements - films like *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* and *The Blood of a Poet*.

Closely related to these oppositions is the contrast between the commercial film's allegiance to photographic realism and the avant-garde's predilection for subverting that realistic base and pushing the technical possibilities of the medium to their limits.

Thus, for many people, the avant-garde defined itself by its extensive use of extreme close-ups, disorienting camera movement, unusual camera angles, soft focus, gauzes, prismatic and kaleidoscopic images, superimposition, extreme variables in lighting and exposure, negative images, dis-



Dziga Vertov's Agit-Prop Train

torted and totally abstract images (in the non-figurative sense of the term), and by such shooting and editing devices as slow motion, reverse motion, pixillation, quick cutting, intricate montage, single-frame editing and flicker effects. The "other" avant-garde showed little interest in such devices, and tended to regard them as merely "arty" or actively interfering with the ideological intentions of the work. (Again, the "traditional" avant-garde has its exceptions: Warhol comes to mind immediately; also much of the works of James Broughton, Rudy Burckhardt and the Kuchar brothers.)

While it would be too limiting to base a definition of avant-garde film solely on its deviations from the spatial, temporal (and sometimes aural) conventions of realistic cinema, it is essential to recognize that these deviations derive from the modernist traditions shared by all avant-garde artists: the search for the "essence" of their art. Siegfried Kracauer (hardly a proponent of deviations from realist norms in cinema) recognized that this "intense preoccupation with cinematic techniques and devices" derived from the artists' "urge to build from the ingrained properties of their medium."⁴⁴ That modernist premise also underlies Hans Richter's contention that avant-garde film was "an outgrowth" of, and "an experimental laboratory" for, modern art.⁴⁵

Richter was thinking of the major art movements of the earlier part of the twentieth century, but there are similar ties between more recent art movements - abstract expressionism and minimalism, in particular - and avant-garde film of the '60s and '70s.

It is not just the visual arts, but modernism in general that has supplied the determining features for virtually all definitions of avant-garde film - with the exception of those extremely politicized definitions for which revolutionary political content is the only relevant consideration. Phillip Drummond has succinctly described the "general features of modernism (which) are immediately appropriate for discussions of the notion of an avant-garde film practice." They are: 1) displacing "fictional models" with "a broader and more fragmented set of types and genres"; 2) concentrating on "the processes and apparatus of sign-production themselves"; and 3) questioning "the social nature of film practice."⁴⁵ Since the 1920s all of these features have been recognized as components of a complete definition of avant-garde film.

Thus, it follows that the appearance of a new technique or new thematic concern does not call for a redefinition of avant-garde film. Whether it is rephotographing frames and strips of film, or introducing long passages of verbal or printed texts, or raising questions about the aesthetic and ideologi-



John Heartfield, *Hurrah, the Butter is Finished* (1935)

cal nature of film within the film itself, or re-introducing elements of narrative - these, like other "innovations", have already been prepared for by definitions of avant-garde film from the beginning.

It also follows that, despite the attitudes of some critics, the avant-garde is not a horse race - a way of discovering who is "ahead". Michael Snow, mounted on *Wavelength*, did not gallop past Stan Brakhage on *Dog Star Man* back in the mid-1960s - except in the minds of critics who confuse definitions of avant-garde with their personal critical preferences. A definition of the avant-garde that is thoroughly and historically grounded provides equal place for all avant-garde works. If a film *was* avant-garde, then it still is, because it has reflected the avant-garde's major preoccupations from the 1920s to the present.

The only absolute change in definition will come if avant-garde film ceases to exist. Economic or technological factors might make that happen. It is unlikely that the filmmakers will, and certainly the critics won't. Thus, another quotation from Poggioli's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* offers an appropriate conclusion to this inconclusive process of defining the avant-garde:

*Thomas Mann once said that art always sprang up in spite of something, not rarely even in spite of itself. Thus it may also be that the avant-garde is one of those tendencies destined to become art in spite of itself, or even in the out-and-out denial of itself.*⁴⁷

Perhaps that is its first, last and best definition.

1. Among the deniers are Robert Desnos, who insisted as early as 1929 that "in fact, the avant-garde cinema, as in literature and theater, is a fiction" ("Avant-Garde Cinema", in *The Shadow and its Shadow*, p. 37), and Hans Richter, who immediately following World War II declared: "There is no Avantgarde film movement anymore..." ("A History of the Avantgarde", in *Art in Cinema*, ed. Frank Stauffacher (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1947; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1968) p. 19). During the 1960s and '70s, similar announcements of the disappearance or death of the avant-garde in all the arts became increasingly common; see, for example, James S. Ackerman, "The Demise of the Avant-Garde", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XI, iv (October 1969), pp. 371-84; Robert Hughes, "The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde", in *Idea Art*, ed. G. Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1973), pp. 184-94; Hilton Kramer, *The Age of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), especially Kramer's introduction, in which he explains why, "The Age of the Avant-Garde has definitely passed" (p. ix); Christian Zimmer, "L'Avant-garde c'est l'anti-N.R.I.", *Ecran*, No. 55 (Feb. 1977), pp. 19-20.

On the other hand, many (myself included) share Roger Shattuck's view that "Modernism wrote into its scripture a major text, which demands at least in

retrospect, our gratitude: the avant-garde we have with us always", *The Banquet Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 20, and Renato Poggioli's insistence that "Avant-gardism has become the second nature of all modern art" (*The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, tr. G. Fitzgerald (New York: Harper and Row, Icon Editions, 1971), p. 230). Of course, some now argue that modernism is dead - or kept alive only by the artificial life-support systems of the museums, academies and other institutions with vested interests in maintaining the traditional modernist movement - and that the correct role of the avant-garde today is to stand in opposition to modernism. That position was taken by Paul Willemsen in a paper entitled "An Avant-Garde for the '80s", presented at the recent conference on *New Narrative Film and the Future of Film Theory*, sponsored by Simon Fraser University. A similar argument had already been presented by Andreas Huyssen in his essay "The Search for Tradition and Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s", *New German Critique*, No. 22 (Winter 1981), pp. 23-40. Seeds of the Huyssen-Willemsen argument and a withering critique of avant-gardism in general can be found in Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "The Aporias of the Avant-Garde," *The Consciousness Industry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 16-14; the essay first appeared in 1962.



Bunuel, *Un Chien Andalou* (1928)



Man Ray, *Emak Bakia* (1927/70)

2. Sidney Peterson offers as "A Short History of the Avant-Garde", the O.E.D.'s complete list of uses of the term "avant-garde", from 1470-85 to 1800 - all of which use the term in a military context; see *The Dark of the Screen* (New York: Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press, 1980), p. 53.
3. Quoted in Linda Nochlin, "The Invention of the Avant-Garde", in *Avant-Garde Art*, eds. T. Hess and J. Ashberry (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), p.5, from "L'artiste, le savant et l'industriel", contributed by Rodrigues to Saint-Simon's *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles* (1825).
4. Matei Calinescu, "Avant-Garde, Neo-Avant-Garde, Postmodernism: The Culture of Crisis", *Clio*, IV, iii (1975), p. 318.
5. Poggioli, pp. 25-26.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
7. Shattuck, p. 19.
8. Eugene Ionesco, *Notes et contre-notes* (Paris: Ed. Gallimard, 1966), p. 77: "Je préfère définir l'avant-garde en termes d'opposition et de rupture..."
9. Peter Gidal, "Definition and Theory of the Current Avant-Garde: Materialist/Structural Film", *Studio International*, vol. 187 (Feb. 1974), p. 53.
10. Richard Gilman, "The Idea of the Avant-Garde", *Partisan Review*, XXXIX, iii (1972), p. 395.
11. Kramer, p. 16.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
13. Poggioli, p. 181.
14. Enzensberger, p. 35.
15. Poggioli, p. 201.
16. Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 149.
17. Hughes, p. 190.
18. John Weightman, *The Concept of the Avant-Garde* (La Salle, Ill.: Library Press, 1973), p. 24.
19. Desnos, p. 38.
20. Enzensberger, pp. 27-28.
21. Ackerman, p. 377.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Weightman, p. 20.
24. Michael Kirby, *The Art of Time: Essays on the Avant-Garde* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969), p. 18.
25. Ackerman, p. 383.
26. Kramer, p. 4.
27. Les Levine, "Replies", in *Idea Art*, ed. G. Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 196.
28. Jean Mitry, *Le cinéma expérimental* (Paris: Ed. Seghers, 1974); David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema* (New York: Dell, 1971); Dominique Noguez, *Eloge du cinéma expérimental* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979).
29. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Parker Tyler, *Underground Film: A Critical History* (New York: Grove Press, 1969); Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: Dutton, 1967); Stephen Dwozkin, *Film Is: The International Free Cinema* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1975).

30. Malcolm Le Grice, "Thoughts on Recent 'Underground film'", *Afterimage* (London), No. 4 (Autumn 1972), and *Abstract Film and Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977).
31. Noguez, pp. 13-24.
32. Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories", *Screen*, XIX, iii (Autumn 1978), p. 123.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
34. Malcolm Le Grice, "The History We Need", in *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1910-1975* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979), p. 116.
35. Germaine Dulac, "The Avant-Garde Cinema", in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P.A. Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press, 1978), p. 43.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
37. J. Hoberman, "Three Myths of the Avant-Garde", *Film Comment* (May-June 1981), p. 34.
38. Pam Cook, "Teaching Avant-Garde Film: Notes Towards Practice", *Screen Education*, Nos. 32-33 (Autumn-Winter 1979-80), p. 83.
39. Phillip Drummond, "Notions of Avant-Garde Cinema", in *Film as Film* (see note 34), p. 9.
40. Al Rees, "Conditions of Illusionism", *Screen*, XVIII, iii (Autumn 1977), p. 50.
41. Representative of the debate are: Gerard Leblanc, "Quelle avant-garde?" *Cinétique*, Nos. 7-8 (1970), pp. 72-90; Graeme Farnell, "Which Avant-Garde?" *Afterimage* (London), No. 2 (Autumn 1970), pp. 64-71; Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes", *Studio International*, Vol. 190 (Nov.-Dec. 1975), pp. 171-75; articles by Noel Burch, Mike Dunford and Deke Dusingberre in *Afterimage* (London), No. 6 (Summer 1976), special issue on "Perspectives on English Independent Cinema"; Guy Hennebel (ed.), "L'Avant-garde en questions: la blanche ou le rouge?" *Ecran*, No. 55 (Fev. 1977), pp. 13-22, and No. 56 (Mar. 1977), pp. 27-38; Joseph Gibbons-Gibbons, "An Art Liberation Front Discourse on Avant-Garde Film", *Cinemaneews*, No. 6 (1977), p. 3.
42. Pam Cook, p. 96.
43. I am thinking, for instance, of the "formalist" explorations of montage-collage by Stan Venderbeek, Bruce Conner and Al Ruzutis (to mention a few among many possibilities), which are not only satirical comments on "politics", but also critiques of the "politics" of mass communication - of both its content and form; or of Bruce Baillie's satirical *Quixote* and elegaic *Mass: For the Dakota Sioux* in which the "formal" beauty is inseparable from the "political" concerns; or of virtually every film Stan Brakhage has made since the late 1950s. The fact that Brakhage's affirmation of self, family and natural environment seems "conservative", if not "reactionary", to some critics, does not make it any the less "political".
44. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 180.
45. Richter, p. 21.
46. Drummond, p. 11.
47. Poggioli, p. 231.